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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001429

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USPACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2013

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#) [ASSK](#) [NLD](#)

SUBJECT: ANATOMY OF A BURMESE POLITICAL BLOOD BATH

REF: RANGOON 658

Classified By: COM CARMEN M. MARTINEZ for Reasons 1.5 (B,D)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Additional information on the May 30 Depeyin attack continues to emerge from victims and eyewitnesses, providing new context and clarity to the regime's true role in the premeditated assault on ASSK and the NLD. On November 4, NLD members smuggled to us video footage of Aung San Suu Kyi (ASSK) and the NLD convoy, taken in the days and hours preceding the attack, which portrays the phenomenal support the NLD leader enjoys in Burma's hinterland as well as clear evidence of the aggressive position authorities took against her convoy. New testimony obtained in late October from three wounded survivors also underscores the regime's direct role in facilitating the attack, which resulted in the political killings of at least 6 NLD members, an unknown number of supporters, and perhaps as many as 70 members of the convoy's self-appointed security escort of motorcycle outriders. END SUMMARY.

Video Evidence: The Eve of the May 30 Attack

2. (C) On November 4, NLD supporters at the behest of ASSK smuggled a videotape to the U.S. Embassy, requesting that it be delivered to UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur Pinheiro. The one-hour tape, filmed by NLD cameramen, documents the final four days of ASSK's swing through northern Burma and ends the night of May 29, just 24 hours before the deadly May 30 attack on the NLD convoy. Juxtaposed against footage of many thousands of cheering villagers and townspeople, who gathered to welcome ASSK and listen to her speeches, are numerous shots of government security forces and USDA "protesters" who grew in numbers over the course of the trip to harass the passing NLD convoy.

3. (C) In one scene on the video, government-sponsored protesters half-heartedly waved anti-NLD signs; however, local villagers berated the protesters and pulled down their signs, prompting USDA minders to rush in and prod the protesters to keep in line. In one small village, the camera records a large group of protesters who suddenly drop their anti-NLD signs, rush across the road to join NLD supporters, and spontaneously join in singing the Burmese National Anthem as a sign of support for the convoy. Further footage portrays USDA thugs increasingly angry and abusive as the convoy made its way through small towns and villages on the planned return trip to Rangoon.

4. (C) The videotape also shows footage of government security forces maintaining a constant presence along the convoy route and at village stops, including military intelligence and police vans, trucks, motorcycles, and jeeps littering rural roadsides. By the time the NLD convoy reached Myin Mu in Sagaing Division during mid-day on May 29, the USDA had dramatically increased its numbers and added several packed tour buses, light trucks, and sedans to its own parallel convoy. As ASSK and her delegation reached the outskirts of Monywa, the last major town on the route before the attack in Depeyin, hundreds of young motorcycle riders joined the NLD's twelve-vehicle convoy to act as a buffer against the USDA convoy. Finally, as the NLD convoy entered Monywa that evening, authorities cut off the town's electricity. The final scene of the tape shows a massive, candle-lit crowd of thousands welcoming the NLD convoy into an eerily darkened downtown Monywa.

5. (C) The Embassy showed the tape with accompanying translation to visiting UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur Paulo Pinheiro on November 6 during his visit to Rangoon. Pinheiro was taken aback by the huge size of the crowds turning out in every town and village through which the NLD convoy passed. He had previously been under the impression that the NLD delegation was being greeted at every stop by masses of anti-NLD protesters and that very few locals were supporting the NLD. He felt strongly that this tape should be shown to ASEAN leaders, who to this point don't believe ASSK has any popularity left in Burma. He advised that Razali should see the tape and use it in further briefings with ASEAN. Pinheiro will see that international television media outlets receive a copy of the tape when he leaves Burma.

Survivors: Witnesses to the Blood Bath

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16. (C) On October 30, three survivors of the May 30 attack secretly traveled to Rangoon to give their eyewitness

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accounts to Embassy officers. All three showed us permanent wounds from the attack, including scars, punctures, and broken bones. The three survivors, NLD members based in Mandalay, were in the first and third cars immediately behind ASSK's vehicle during the attack on May 30. Their testimony picks up the story from where the videotape ends. At dusk on May 30, ASSK, eleven additional NLD cars, a truck full of pro-NLD monks, and hundreds of volunteer pro-NLD security "outriders" left Monywa and arrived at Kyi village. Earlier in the day, ASSK, apparently aware of the increasingly aggressive posture of the USDA and local authorities, had ordered her entire delegation to use passive resistance if attacked.

17. (C) As the convoy passed through Kyi village, a local monk ran up and asked ASSK if she would address the villagers, adding that they had been waiting for her all day. NLD Vice Chairman U Tin Oo, in the lead car, pulled over to wait about 30 yards further down the road. At that moment, a column of USDA buses, trucks, and sedans that had tailed the NLD convoy for the previous three hours stopped and unloaded. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of USDA members armed with bamboo staves, sharpened wooden stakes, and slingshots began attacking villagers and motorcycle outriders at the rear of the convoy. The villagers fought back, trying to seize weapons from the USDA attackers. Some members of the NLD convoy stepped out of their cars and could see the melee illuminated by headlights from trucks in the rear. After five minutes, the USDA attackers began attacking the NLD convoy itself, advancing forward on both sides of the road firing bicycle spokes from the slingshots and using their weapons to beat the occupants of each successive NLD car.

18. (C) According to one of the eyewitnesses, Kin Maung Thaun, NLD Mandalay Division Executive Member and a passenger in the third car behind ASSK's vehicle, was hit several times in the head by a USDA youth who pleaded with him, "Uncle, please lie down and pretend you are dead; I was told to kill you." Kin Maung Thaun slumped down as instructed, while the attackers, always aiming at the head, badly beat four women and killed two other men in his car. Before the USDA reached the lead car, eight of ASSK's bodyguards surrounded her but were either beaten to the ground or were forced off into nearby rice paddies. The wounded driver from Kin Maung Thaun's car saw the USDA smash ASSK's windshield, so he ran forward to help protect her. The USDA beat him, breaking his right arm, and pierced him above the eye with a bicycle spoke. When the driver fell down, the attackers wrenched his broken arm and continued beating him for 10 minutes. Thirty minutes into the attack, ASSK's own driver, with ASSK still unscathed but now unprotected, sped her away from the attack scene and to the next village (Note: ASSK was then detained by local authorities. End note).

19. (C) After ASSK safely escaped the scene, USDA attackers shifted from beating and killing to looting the NLD vehicles.

Two hours after the attack began, a USDA leader blew a whistle that sounded retreat to the attackers and waiting buses. Kin Maung Thaun, the NLD Mandalay official, then climbed out of his car and saw three dead NLD members in the car behind his. He then hid with three other NLD men in a rice paddy about 80 yards from the head of the NLD convoy. Around 11:30 PM, about 1.5 hours after the USDA mob had left, military and riot police forces arrived and began to clean up the attack site, washing down the road and arranging the NLD vehicles to look as if they had been in accidents. Riot police used their shields to bring sand to cover the diesel and blood stains on the road surface. Kin Maung Thaun then watched them use a blanket to load at least fifteen severely wounded and dead onto a waiting truck. Around 3:00 AM on May 31, a group of high level officials arrived from Monywa, slowly passed alongside the destroyed NLD convoy, and left the scene.

Comment: A Well-Planned Attack  
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110. (C) The new video and eyewitness testimony provides more clarity on the methodology the regime used to attack and shut down the NLD in May. As the NLD's trip progressed through Mandalay and Sagaing Divisions, and as ASSK drew larger and larger crowds even in the face of ever-stiffer government and USDA intimidation, the regime tried increasingly hostile and aggressive tactics with the hopes of dissuading the NLD from continuing. This in turn generated more support for the NLD in each town and village, and eventually led to hundreds of NLD supporters on motorcycles joining to provide security from the growing USDA menace. Faced with the huge candlelight reception in Monywa on May 29th, held in the face of more government and USDA intimidation, the regime then

chose not to risk attacking the NLD in a public area, and instead safely attacked in a remote village on a desolate stretch of road where very little civil population was available to rise up and come to her defense.

11. (C) The USDA youth telling the older NLD member to "pretend you are dead, uncle," because he was ordered to kill him, is compelling evidence that the regime, through its agents in the USDA, ordered these people killed for political reasons. This conclusion is further supported by the government security forces being continuously present throughout the entire trip up to Monywa after which they suddenly disappeared. The regime held back its security forces so the USDA could attack and destroy the NLD convoy, kill supporters, neutralize NLD leadership, and leave the government with plausible deniability. We have provided Pinheiro with both the video tape and pictures of the wounded survivors so he will have a fuller understanding of the context surrounding the May 30 human attack. END COMMENT.  
Martinez